

RIDGWAY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ELEMENT



**Town of Ridgway
June 2, 2011**

I. PROBLEM STATEMENT

II. PURPOSE

III. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES and RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Community Outreach Plan

B. Citizen Participation Plan

IV. CONCLUSIONS

I. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Public meetings of the Ridgway Town Council, Planning Commission, and subcommittees are sparsely attended and short of healthy debate, and it appears there is not a clear understanding of what the local government operations entail and consider for the community.

II. PURPOSE

Develop a communications framework that effectively and efficiently provides and distributes information regarding local government activities, and actively engage the community in the decision-making and planning processes to create a broad based understanding of local government while encouraging citizen participation.

III. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, and RESPONSIBILITIES

A. COMMUNITY OUTREACH PLAN

GOAL: Inform and educate the community about local government

Objective:

Effectively and efficiently provide information on local government operations, including an educational forum that encourages citizen participation and dialogue with elected and appointed officials and town administration.

Strategies:

1. Expand and encourage the use of the Town Website as a resource for community information, including posting of monthly updates of Town activity, projects and events, and email distribution list to remind community members to check the Town website, <http://www.town.ridgway.co.us/>, for current information. As appropriate, do the same with the Ouray Community Calendar online at: <http://www.ouraycountycolorado.org/calendar.html>)

Responsibility – Town Administration, Town Council, Planning Commission

2. Write quarterly articles for publication in the local newspaper, focusing on current events, upcoming projects, opportunities for participation in local government, items of interest, etc.

Responsibility –Town Council, Town Manager

3. Develop an email distribution list of community members for frequent, informative distribution of information, inclusive of the strategies identified within this plan. Solicit community sign up on the email distribution list with the monthly water billing, once per year, and also through a link on the website and newsletter distribution. Citizens and businesses may be provided the option to sign up specifically for items of interest (eg: newsletters, monthly updates, Planning Commission and/or Town Council agendas). Staff may work with the website administrator to identify opportunities in signing up online to receive automatic updates.

Responsibility – Town Manager, Town Clerk

4. Develop a monthly local government update, and distribute via email and post on the bulletin board of the Town website (*this will be the monthly staff reports currently published monthly in the Town Council meeting packet*).

Responsibility – Town Manager, Town Clerk, Public Works Director

5. Develop and distribute an annual newsletter summarizing local government operations, planning, capital projects, budget priorities, etc. The inaugural newsletter will be mailed with a request to submit an email address for the Town distribution list, and then subsequent newsletters will be via email distribution.

Responsibility – Town Manager, Town Clerk, Public Works Director

6. Hang temporary signage on Town Hall / Community Center sign in Hartwell Park announcing Town Council and Planning Commission meetings “tonight”.

Responsibility – Town Clerk

7. Have coffee, tea, and light snacks available to the public during regular Town Council meetings.

Responsibility – Town Clerk, Town Council

8. Explore opportunities for engaging local youth in local government, including holding a regular meeting of the Ridgway Town Council at the Ridgway School, and actively soliciting input from local youth.

Responsibility – Town Council

9. Set up a “suggestion box” where the community may provide feedback, suggestions, etc. to the Town Administration on local government operations. The existing night drop box outside of Town Hall may be appropriate for this purpose.

Responsibility – Town Manager, Town Clerk

10. Explore and promote additional opportunities to work with Ridgway Schools on special projects and education on local government (eg: classroom presentations, tours of water

and wastewater facilities, community projects like construction of picnic tables, school art display at Town Hall, etc.).

Responsibility – Town Administration

11. Attend and actively participate in Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce Board Meetings, and present local government operations and updates, opportunities for participation, and solicit feedback from the Chamber.

Responsibility – Town Manager, Town Council Representative

12. Establish regular monthly meetings with the Executive Director of the Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce.

Responsibility – Town Manager

13. Establish regular monthly meetings with the Superintendent of the Ridgway School District.

Responsibility – Town Manager

14. Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with local and regional civic and volunteer organizations such as church groups, non profit organizations, etc.

Responsibility – Town Administration

15. Print monthly Regular Town Council Meeting agendas in local newspaper, and/or publish business card size advertisement of meetings, if financially appropriate.

Responsibility – Town Clerk

16. Set up a local government outreach booth at Town-sponsored events such as the Love Your Valley Brewfest, Ridgway Concert Series, etc.

Responsibility - Town Council, Planning Commission

17. Publish police activities in the weekly paper.

Responsibility – Town Marshal, Town Manager

18. Establish regular, informal and personal contact with residents and businesses to put a real face on local government and share information about Ridgway (eg: set aside an hour or so each week to visit a local business or post office visit distinctly for this purpose). Town Administration may assist with information to share with the community.

Responsibility – Town Council, Planning Commission, Town Manager, Marshal's Office

B. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

GOAL- Actively engage the community in the community-building, decision-making and planning processes in order to insure broad-based representation and input for all local government decisions

Objective:

Reach out to residents and businesses to understand why there is limited participation in local government.

Strategies:

1. In order to understand mechanisms by which increased citizen participation might be achieved, it is important to know why citizens are not participating. It is recommended that an informal survey of the community be taken to understand this phenomenon in more detail and to implement appropriate and effective strategies accordingly. In particular, reach out to the community to explore the option of streaming Town Council meetings live on the internet. The Ridgway Sun has offered to poll through the newspaper and online established polling system. Alternatively, the Town could develop an online survey and solicit feedback at very little cost. Some questions may be:

a. Do you participate in local government decision making? Yes/No

i. If no, Why? Select all that apply

1. I don't have enough time
2. I'm content with my elected and appointed officials and trust them with making important decisions for my community
3. I'm just not interested at this time
4. It takes too much time and effort to figure out what is going to be discussed, and when the discussion will happen
5. Other: _____

ii. If yes, why? Select all that apply

1. It's important to me that my voice be heard
2. I have the time and all community decisions are important because they impact my daily life
3. I know my input will be considered
4. Other: _____

iii. What would entice you to participate? Select all that apply

1. Knowing I'll be heard and my inputs considered
2. Certain topics or issues that interest me
3. Other: _____

- b. How would you like to be notified about public discussion and agenda items for public meetings? *Select all that apply*
 - i. Email
 - ii. Website
 - iii. Newspaper
 - iv. Public Posting areas (Town Hall, Post Office)

- c. What can your Elected Officials or Town Administration do to encourage your participation?
 - i. Stream meetings live on the internet
 - ii. Invest resources in publishing meeting agendas and additional outreach efforts (newsletters, emails, etc.)
 - iii. Other: _____

- d. If the Town Administration were to stream Council meetings live on the internet, would you listen? Yes/No

Responsibility – Town Council

2. Create a greater presence in the community:

- a. Establish regular, informal and personal contact with residents and businesses to put a real face on local government and solicit information about Ridgway (eg: set aside an hour or so each week to visit a local business or post office visit distinctly for this purpose).

Responsibility – Town Council, Planning Commission, Town Manager

- b. Promote Marshals as the Peace Officers they are by encouraging foot and bike patrol, and attending community events on duty, as appropriate.

Responsibility – Town Manager, Marshals Department

3. Make government fun and personable, and create an environment at Town Hall that encourages the community and visitors to interact with staff.

- a. Create a more inviting space at Town Hall and the community center with colorful walls, Ridgway School student art displays, local artist displays, murals, flowers, garden, etc. Appropriate funds for local art competition, local art acquisition, landscaping, etc. for Town Hall and/or Town Parks.

- b. Implement a local art purchasing program and appropriate funds to acquire functional, local artwork (benches, swings, etc).

Responsibility – Town Council, Planning Commission, Town Administration

4. Participate in RACC After-Hours Business networking social events

Responsibility – Town Council, Planning Commission, Town Manager

5. Assist in the promotion of community resources such as Region 10 Enterprise Zone opportunities, small business development center resources, housing resources, community center and town hall availability, etc.

Responsibility – Town Council, Planning Commission, Town Administration

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The Town Government is interested in communicating more frequently and effectively with the community, and will work diligently to encourage increased and broad-based community participation in local government activities and decision-making. The Ridgway community is a valuable resource of diverse and engaging people, businesses, and perspectives with ideas that when shared will inform elected and appointed officials and staff to implement actions that enable the community to develop in an organic and progressive direction.

Basic principles and values for good governance including: listening, understanding, engaging and respecting diverse opinions, are understood and expected of administration, elected and appointed officials, and therefore, not addressed directly with this Plan.

As with many planning documents, the strategies identified here include those that are in process, and also recommendations that will require financial, technical, and human resource allocation for implementation. The proposed goals and strategies should be revisited and evaluated for effectiveness and appropriateness over time.